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AUTHOR Anson, Chris M.
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ABSTRACT

Focusing on purpose in the writing of college freshmen, a study examined the writing processes and how they related to the conceptions of purpose of four freshmen enrolled in a composition course at Indiana University. Discourse-based interviews were conducted before and after the students completed three tasks designed to vary their choice of audience, mode, and focus. Analysis revealed two tendencies that characterized how students viewed the purpose for their writing. Some students were "rhetorically limited" in the development of their purposes and proceeded according to a performance oriented, dualistic, mechanistic view of writing. Others were "rhetorically flexible," constantly moving between their global and operational purposes. Results indicated that students' models of writing and literacy probably influenced their writing more than the specific features of the tasks to which they were responding. At the highest level, these models either inhibited or enhanced the students' thinking processes by restricting or opening up possibilities for more specific purposes within and beyond the texts they were producing. Results support a writing pedagogy in which a qualitative reformulation of students' discourse models is more central to their continued learning than the quantitative acquisition or mastery of certain discourse-specific skills. (An analysis of one subject's response patterns and a three-page reference list are included.) (JD)

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Chris M. Anson, Assistant Professor
Program in Composition and Communication
209 Lind Hall
207 Church St., S.E.
The University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Office phone: (612) 373-2541
Home Phone: (612) 822-8730

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Abstract

In spite of its obvious centrality in written discourse, the concept of "purpose" has remained illusive, ill-defined, and unexplored in composition research. Recent studies of writing have focused more sharply on the actual processes of composing than on features of the writer's rhetorical situation or on the way that situation gives purpose to the writing event. Without recourse to the writer's purposes within and beyond the text, our scrutiny of composing processes offers us little insight into the deeper levels of cognition and affect underlying the act of writing.

The following pages describe a case study of purpose in the writing of college freshmen enrolled in a composition course at Indiana University. Discourse-based interviews were conducted with the participants before and after they responded to each of three tasks designed to vary their choice of audience, mode, and focus. Analysis of the data reveals two tendencies--one productive, one limiting--in which students conceptualize the purposes for their writing. In contrast to the predictions of functional discourse taxonomies, these conceptualizations are more apt to grow out of the students' models of writing and literacy than the specific features of the tasks to which they are responding. The results support a writing pedagogy in which a qualitative reformulation of students' discourse models is more central to their continued learning than the quantitative acquisition or mastery of certain discourse-specific skills.

Exploring the Dimensions of Purpose in College Writing

For all its recent scrutiny of writing processes and behaviors, composition research has generally ignored the social and contextual dimensions of writing (Humes, 1983). Until recently, it has not been very important to the researcher what context the writer is in when composing; what consequences the writer anticipates his or her writing will have; whether the incentive for writing comes from the writer being studied or from the investigator; or what reason the writer has for writing.

The last of these considerations--the writer's "purpose" or "aim"--is one of the most frequently mentioned but least explored and understood aspects of writing. For several years, composition theorists have lamented the lack of substantive research in this area, especially as it relates to unskilled writer's developing awareness of language structure and function. Odell (1979), for example, has raised a number of important questions that bear on discourse theorists' assertions about the important of purpose in the composing process: do writers justify their choices by referring to their basic purpose in writing? What proportion of our students are unable to articulate reasons for their choices? Are there some kinds of tasks in which purpose seems a more important consideration than it does in other kinds of tasks? These and related questions suggest a need to explore the way writers' conceptions of purpose relate to the linguistic features of their writing.

Current theories of purpose generally adhere to a "text-based" model of discourse in which specific features of the text

itself are sufficient to indicate the writer's underlying "dominant" purpose or aim. In the taxonomies of Britton, et al. (1975), Emig (1971), and Kinneavy (1971), for example, writers are thought to compose "transactionally" or "expressively," "poetically" or "extensively," and these aims are said to be recognizable in features of the text produced. Happily, such taxonomies have propelled us well beyond the rigid confines of nineteenth-century "modal" theories of discourse, and have led to important curricular innovations (Connors, 1981). Yet they remain unable to account for the particular purposes brought to the text by the writer and reader--a point well rehearsed in recent theories of reading and interpretation (see Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978; Smith, 1978). Furthermore, text-based theories do not account for the role of context in the production or interpretation of written discourse, relying instead on broad functional categories established a priori to the analysis of particular texts.

As rhetoricians have long argued, analysis of writers' purposes demands knowledge of the rhetorical situation in which the text is produced (see, for example, Bitzer, 1968, 1980; Hymes, 1964)--including knowledge of the social roles, purposes, and assumptions of its participants (Brandt, 1983; Brown & Herndl, forthcoming; Odell & Goswami, 1984). Consequently, the study of purpose in student writers must also acknowledge the effects of the educational context, a "community" in its own right, but one intrinsically tied to the larger socio-cultural milieu (Clark & Florio, 1983). The presence of educational

ideologies, which often are influenced by more general institutional, curricular, political or cultural goals (Piche, 1977), no doubt affects the students' attitudes toward and production of the writing they do in the classroom, adding an important dimension to the purposes underlying their composing processes (see Fulkerson, 1979; Kroll, 1980; Mosenthal, 1983.)

Because "situation" constitutes an external component of writing, it is thus more easily described than the writer's internal thought processes. Yet at the heart of any composing event are the psychological and cognitive processes of composing--processes that motivate planning, reading and rescanning, assessing, predicting, and revising. Unfortunately, the inaccesibility of mental processes in writing has proved a major stumbling block to many researchers, especially those predisposed to deducing such presumably unrecoverable processes from their apparant manifestation in outwardly observable facts.

Part of this difficulty is represented in debates over the relative functions of tacit and metalinguistic knowledge. Testimony of famous writers suggests that there is no necessary connection between outward discussion of one's writing and the inner psychological complexity of the writing process itself (see Emig, 1971). Accordingly, some theorists question the validity of retrospective accounts of mental processes (cf. Smith & Miller, 1978; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Ericsson & Simon, 1984). Perhaps for this reason, studies examining the cognitive processes of writing have relied upon a deductive method of analysis--a reconstruction of the writer's thinking through an examination of

texts, and, more recently, of oral "composing aloud" protocols (Flower & Hayes, 1981) or observations of writers' actual composing behaviors (Matsuhashi, 1982). In bypassing the "confounding" effects of memory and elaboration, this method is assumed simply to provide raw "internal" data, unencumbered by the judgments or metacognition of the writer.

If the aim of the research, however, is not so much to try to recover the actual processes of composing as to discover the relationship between constructs of the writing situation and the writer's composition of a text, then retrospective reports are more than adequate to provide such data. First, they avoid two problems inherent to "real-time" analysis: the lack of opportunity for the researcher to discuss the writing with the subject, and the tendency to create an abnormal, experimental setting where the subject is not free either psychologically or processually to do whatever s/he normally does when writing. Retrospective accounts provide opportunities for the writer to talk about (or discover through talk) not only some of the tacit forms of knowledge guiding the writing event, but also aspects of the rhetorical situation that are tied up with these inner processes. Odell, Goswami and Herrington (1983), for example, provide much evidence for the "recovery" of tacit choices during the composing process. Retrospective reports also free the participant to write in a natural setting unhampered by the hovering shadow of experimental analysis.

The intent of the present study, therefore, was to examine the nature and function of purpose in students' writing through

an analysis of the students' own reports of what they were trying to do in their texts and how this related to their constructs of a real or imagined context and audience. Accordingly, I conducted intensive case-analyses of four freshman writers enrolled in a composition course at Indiana University in the spring of 1984. To learn how these students' writing processes related to their conceptions of purpose, I studied in detail over 22 hours of transcriptions from taped "discourse-based interviews" (Odell, Goswami & Herrington, 1983) designed to explore not only the larger rhetorical and educational dimensions of the writers' purposes but also the specific operational purposes embodied in their rhetorical and linguistic decisions (see Knoblauch, 1980).

Throughout this analysis was the underlying assumption that retrospective reports of students' writing processes would reveal patterns in the way they conceived of their purposes for writing and the way these purposes guided their writing within the academic context. That is, in spite of the cognitive limitations of retrospective reports, such reports reveal the writer's larger conceptions of writing--what is is, what one should know about it, and how one should go about doing it (Tomlinson, 1984). In this respect, the study was designed to uncover as many dimensions of purpose as possible, as these might emerge from an examination of the students' specific planning, writing, and revising of three college assignments.

METHOD

Traditional empirical research methodologies are particular-

ly unsuitable for studying writers' purposes because the act of controlling variables or manipulating instructional contexts changes the very nature of the participants' purposes, especially when they are aware of the controls. Consequently, the present study was designed to preserve as much as possible the ecological validity of the classroom, making use of a pyramidal research design to provide the maximum descriptive power with the least instrusion upon the natural context (Graves, 1981).

Participants

Two sections of freshman composition served as the context for the present study. In the first week of the course, all 40 students were "profiled" as writers. Profiles were constructed from two instruments: an initial out-of-class writing assignment, focusing on the students' experiences as writers; and a "writing inventory," a detailed questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes, beliefs and experiences concerning written communication and the writing process (see Burke, 1981; Kucer, 1983; Dougherty, 1985).

After careful analysis of these instruments, four students (one male and one female from each of the two sections) were chosen to participate voluntarily in the study. Profiles for these students revealed a desired mix of writing ability, experiences as writers, and attitudes toward literacy. The students were also ethnically, demographically, and socio-economically mixed. All four students agreed to participate in the study when first asked.

Collection of Data

I conducted an initial one-hour interview with each participant to discuss his or her response to the writing inventory. Participants then responded to three writing assignments that were part of the regular course syllabus. Before composing rough drafts of each text, all the students in both sections were given a day or two to think about and, optionally, plan our their response. The four participants then discussed this planning with me in private conference. All discussions were taped.

After writing both a rough and a revised draft in response to the assignment (again, as part of the course), each participant then met with me a second time to discuss the two drafts. These second meetings were patterned on the discourse-based interview procedure as described by Odell, Goswami and Herrington (1983). Interviews focused generally on the students' conceptions of their purpose for writing, and specifically on their reasons for making some of the changes reflected in the two drafts. Types of changes discussed included lexical substitutions, deletions, and additions; syntactic reformulations; and sentence-, paragraph-, and discourse-level changes (including deleted and added paragraphs and sentences, false starts, and major reconceptualizations of original drafts, although these were rare).

The three tasks used in this study were designed to be directive or non-directive in terms of audience, nature of the "topic" or "focus," and the possible form of the response. In order to enrich the data through comparisons of the ways that

the students interpreted the generalized assignments and developed specific purposes for them, the tasks were varied along one or more of these parameters. The first assignment, for example, specified the domain of the topic and the form of the response, and restricted the choice of audience to one or more unknown readers: students were asked to write about a community problem, in the form of a letter they might actually send (adapted from Freedman and Robinson, 1982).

The second assignment specified the domain of the topic and the nature of the reader, but provided more freedom for the form of response: students were asked to choose someone they knew personally and write as if that person were their primary audience. They were to discuss some thought or belief they had had, or some action they had taken, which is socially tabbooed.

Finally, the third assignment specified only the domain of the topic: students were asked to write about any new knowledge they had obtained recently, for any reader, in any form. Thus while the tasks were demonstrably different in kind, they were designed to constrain neither the range of possible rhetorical purposes nor the range of operational purposes in the responses.

Texts in response to these three assignments were collected from all 40 class members and were analyzed for features such as specificity of audience, contextual ties to the classroom, nature of the subject matter, kinds and quantity of revisions made between the two drafts, and the ways in which the students seemed to have interpreted the assignments and developed purposes from them. This preliminary text-analysis established a context for

examining the more extensive data from the case studies.

The freshman composition course which provided the context for this study was organized around the theme of "exploring language." One part of the course had a specific focus on language in all its forms, and on issues related to language sensitivity. The other half of the course involved an introspective, highly process-oriented approach to the writing. Thus, the course provided the students with new perspectives on the use and functions of language, both spoken and written, and involved them in "ethnographic" explorations of the language around them, through the collection and interpretation of language data. At the same time, the course also provided them with the opportunity to explore their own uses of language, particularly in writing, as a means of understanding themselves as language users. This second aspect of the course was based on curricular experimentation conducted during the period from 1982-1984 by David Bleich at Indiana University. Assignments included both reflective analyses of the writing and reading processes as well as more conventional tasks designed as springboards for such analyses. The conventional assignments included those used in the present study. Thus, the study itself, and the need for the case-study students to reflect upon their own thoughts and processes in writing the three assignments, were an integral and non-obtrusive part of the entire course context.

Results and Analysis

In moving among levels of data, from the analysis of class

texts and participants' texts to the transcriptions of the discourse-based interviews and discussions of the writing inventory, two general tendencies emerged which eventually solidified into fuller pictures of the four case-study students as types of writers. More than any other factor from which the students were selected for study, these tendencies explained the way that the writers developed purposes for their writing, the way they discussed their writing and revising, and the way they conceived of themselves, rhetorically, in relation to their intended audiences. Reciprocally, further interview data then generally confirmed these general typologies and led to some important refinements.

The key finding of this study suggests that students' purposes for writing are closely tied to their "models" of writing--sets of ideational constructs which relate to the students' conceptions of writing as as an academic and, ultimately, a social activity. At the highest level, these models either inhibit or enhance the students' thinking processes by restricting or opening up possibilities for more specific purposes within and beyond the texts they are producing.

At one extreme are writers we might characterize as rhetorically limited in the development of their purposes. Overwhelmingly class-directed, they write primarily for the purpose of completing the assignment. Their texts tend to include references to the assignment or the class, and when they are given a context or audience for writing beyond the classroom, their responses are artificial, written to vaguely defined or

surrogate readers. They find it difficult to develop purposes for writing that are free from the impositions of the curriculum. Consequently, they take few risks, writing short texts without much rhetorical or stylistic experimentation. Typically, they seem to view their texts as demonstrations of competence, of what they have learned or what they knew, not as a way to learn or to know. They are also very much preoccupied with "what the teacher wants," often asking for clarification of an assignment or hints as to how they should respond to it, what is the "correct way." Their global purposes for their writing in the classroom are tied closely to a performance-oriented, dualistic, mechanistic view of writing.

At the other extreme are writers with rhetorically flexible purposes. Such writers are able to accommodate their writing to different kinds of tasks with different topics and audiences--in fact, they seem eager to do so. In writing to non-classroom audiences, they sometimes play roles effectively, so that the resulting text shares all the characteristics we might find in actual texts written in the extracurricular context. The classroom seems to drop away from the thinking of writers in this group, and they enjoy a kind of rhetorical gaming, using different styles for different purposes. Because rhetorically flexible writers do not compose mechanistically, instead moving constantly between their global and operational purposes, their drafts show more extensive revisions, and they talk about these revisions by referring to many features of the composing situation, such as their imagined and actual readers, their projection

of an image as writer, or how they are interpreting the writing assignment and developing specific purposes for it without radically violating the assignment's parameters. Writers in this group also seem more willing to experiment with their purposes, perhaps defining an assignment idiosyncratically, without worrying about the teacher's expectations.

To see how these models of purpose influence writers' composing choices and behaviors, we turn to one of the case-study participants, Mindy. The analysis shows the dramatic effect her model of writing has on her purposes both within and beyond her texts, and, in this case, on the way these purposes hinder her ability to learn about writing through her engagement in its various processes. For the sake of consision, I will suggest the psychological reality of this model by examining Mindy's conceptions of her writing as these are revealed through excerpts from the accounts of her planning and revising of the three texts.

"Just for the Class": Purpose in Mindy's Model of Writing

Mindy's writing and the way she talked about it suggests that her purposes were primarily class-directed and unproductive in helping to further her development of writing strategies. Throughout our interviews, it was apparent that she wished to do what was expected of her, to demonstrate competence and follow the teacher's agenda. Her consistent focus on the traditional concerns of the composition course--the organization of her ideas, the choice of the "right word," the avoidance of grammatical errors--dominated much of what she said about what

she was trying to accomplish in her writing. Consequently, other aspects of the rhetorical situation in her writing did not seem to concern her much because she thought them peripheral to the main purpose of classroom discourse--to "do it right" and "not look dumb." Our discussions, however, showed that other concerns such as audience could exist in Mindy's thinking, but she preferred not to attend to them. She devoted her attention to what she thought was important in the academic context, and this was strong enough to push into the background other matters relating to the surrounding imagined context of her writing.

Perhaps because of her attempt to respond "as expected," Mindy's planning for her writing typically involved thinking about the assignment and then choosing what she called "the easiest way out"--the simplest possible way to fulfill instructional expectations. This "criterion of simplicity" is evidenced in her planning for the first assignment; she decided to write about some broken showers in her dormitory because it seemed easier than dealing with more distant problems. Mindy's criterion of simplicity also influenced her choice of mode of discourse in the second and third assignments, in which she wrote letters because other forms carry more risk; "essays are a lot harder to write; everything has to be really good and really proper, and when you write a letter you can be more casual; it's just a lot easier to write."

Perhaps because she is so preoccupied with "doing her essay right," Mindy does not see much value in considering an audience beyond the instructor. She tries instead to produce clear prose

with no errors. In our discussion of her response to the first task, for example--the letter about her broken dorm shower--Mindy has thought little about her reader; only with some probing does she begin to hypothesize that he is "probably the person who's the head of maintenance or something, somebody to take care of [the problem] or fix it, or tell somebody to fix it." At first she describes him as a "middle-aged guy," a janitor with a "dingy T-shirt and blue jeans." Later, she entertains the possibility that he could be an administrator, but finally the difference is unimportant to her choices in writing the letter: [M=Mindy; I=Interviewer]

> M: Watch him [the recipient] turn out to wear a suit or something . . . .
>
> I: Do you feel you'd make different choices about what to put in the letter [for the janitor or the "administrator"]?
>
> M: Probably it would be about the same, because if I was writing to the guy in the suit, I'd want him to hear all my gripes and stuff, because if I just told him what the problem was, probably . . . I don't know. I guess you gotta tell him what's wrong with it. And the guy--the janitor--you'd have to tell him the same thing.

Part of Mindy's difficulty predicting the effect her choices will have on different readers thus originates in the absence of imagined context for her response. Since this context is finally unimportant to her, subverted by the classroom, there is no point in developing a purpose inherent to the writing act (that is, above and beyond the simple requirement to produce a text), nor in adapting the language of the text to realize such a purpose. Interestingly, Mindy is aware that her writing might have a

different effect on a janitor or an administrator, but this awareness does not play a role in her writing because the letter serves no purpose beyond the classroom:

I: Are you going to send this?

M: Oh, no! [Laughs.] It sounds too goofy.

I: Well, maybe you'll think about sending it to the person.

M: By the time it's done it'll probably . . . someone's probably already said something. Because we've been griping about it all week. I'm doing this for the class, really. I'm just trying to find something that I think is a problem, something that's close to me yet's not too distant that I can't write about it.

I: Do you suppose you're going to try to find the guy's name or his position to do the letter?

M: Oh, no, because I'm not sending it.

I: You'll just put "Dear Blank"?

M: Oh, I'll find a name for that. Because I could probably just ask one of the ladies . . . our maid or something.

In her final draft, Mindy decides to make up the name "Mr. Miller" for her salutation. Likewise, her choice of a recipient for her letter in the second assignment is arbitrary, tagged on for the purpose of the task:

I: What about this here, choose someone you know personally?

M: I was going to write, um, I don't know, really . . . I was going to write to a neighbor or something.

I: You haven't decided specifically, then?

M: I could almost pick anybody; it really wouldn't matter. I could just pick my grandma, it wouldn't matter to me.

I: Doesn't matter whether you'd choose your neighbor or your grandmother?

M: Not really. Maybe like examples, I might choose different examples.

Unlike the awareness displayed by writers in other research studies who intend their texts to reach their audiences (see Odell, Goswami & Quick, 1983)--or are able to consider the rhetorical dimensions of their writing as if it would reach such audiences--Mindy's purposes do not help her make decisions in her writing. Because she does not care who reads her letter, or why, she discusses her grandmother as possible recipient of her letter in the abstract, a kind of rhetorical parallel to her real grandmother. The parallel grandmother, however, suspends judgment, and will not act; she is not subject to the letter's effects, existing instead as a rhetorical shadow created from the educational need to have at least some audience in mind.

One of the more important probes of the students' purposes involved discussing with them the reasons for their revisions. Not surprisingly, Mindy had difficulty explaining many of her mostly word- and phrase-level revisions, particularly in the first and second assignments. Over half her explanations referred to the "sound" of the words and phrases she revised, rather than to her purpose in writing or the specific effects her choices might have in realizing her purposes. Often she referred to rule-book criteria, as when she added a sentence in her revision of the first assignment because "you should always have a way to solve [the problem]" or when, in writing to her aunt in response to the second assignment, she included a footnote for some information in order to "give credit like you're supposed

to."

Throughout the many hours I spent discussing Mindy's writing with her, I found a student who, because of her class-directedness, was for the most part unable to exploit the forms of knowledge that help writers to produce effective texts with effective results on their readers. Instead, she tried to draw from her "textbook" knowledge of writing, knowledge rather ironically unable to help her in her composing process. This process, then, lacked what we might call "self-enrichment"; because her purpose was most often based on a powerful construct of instructional expectations, her guesses about what was effective and ineffective in her writing could not be guided by more useful rhetorical concerns. She did not learn about writing in the process of doing it, in the process, as Odell, Goswami and Quick (1983) might put it, of "asking the right kinds of questions."

Mindy as Writer: Antecedents of Limited Purpose

We have seen the influence on Mindy's writing of the "current-traditional" paradigm associated with improving writing proficiency, but this equation might meet with a certain amount of skepticism among scholars who believe, as I do, that most people are bombarded with what Goodman (personal communication) calls "literacy events" that provide them with tacit knowledge about the uses and forms of language.

Mindy's honest responses to the writing inventory, however, demonstrate the power that personal writing models, and their socio-educational antecedents, can have on students' attitudes

toward writing and on their writing processes. Mindy admitted quite openly that "most of the writing I've done has been for classwork; the only serious writing I've done was for senior [high school] English." Further discussion of her inventory revealed that throughout her school years, Mindy wrote very little; in most of her classes, short phrases or even "key words" were acceptable as responses to tests because "as long as [the questions] are answered, they get underlined [meaning they are correct]." In English classes, her teachers ignored content, intention, and rhetorical or reader-based matters to focus on correctness:

M: In Senior English you really, you concentrate on grammar, and before like, they really didn't, they went through like what's a verb, what's a prepositional phrase. In Senior English you had to turn in one essay a week, and he'd go through everyone's paper and mark every grammatical error that was made.

I: Did he care much about what you said?

M: Oh, no, as long as you had a good conclusion, a good introduction, and you had, like, topic sentences and concluding sentences with all your paragraphs, it was ok. And on grammatical, like everyplace you had a wrong comma or something, they marked off, like a point or something.

I: What kinds of things did you write about, do you remember?

M: Um, he just said anything.

I: Anything at all. Did he give you topics?

M: Um, sometimes. Like, write a comparative, compare two things, or you say what was different about two things, and that was it.

Perhaps because of this predominantly grammatical instructional emphasis, Mindy brought into the freshman class a dualistic model

of writing (Perry, 1970); thus, she was never sure if what she had done was "correct":

> I: You said [on the inventory], "I find it very hard to write for teachers. I always am worrying about what I might have missed, or what grade I will receive." Um, this is true in any kind of writing you do?
>
> M: Well, I always read through, I correct a lot of grammatical stuff, and then I start thinking like, this doesn't even sound good any more. Like, that's what happened on that last one.
>
> I: Now, you were worrying there what grade, or what you might have missed?
>
> M: Yeah, because I always feel like I've missed something; something doesn't sound right and I haven't caught it.
>
> I: Is it sort of like a guessing game?
>
> M: Well, sometimes, because . . . it's always really the grade, see if it's good or not.
>
> I: What do you think teachers value? I mean, what do you think they want to see that would help you get a good grade?
>
> M: Um, all the grammatical stuff right, and if it said what it's supposed to say.

Mindy's academic experience, however, is not the only source of her limited, dualistic model of writing. At home, she wrote little, mostly "lists, like you know, you make a list of things you had to get, and sometimes letters, and that's it." In spite of her upper middle-class background, she seems not to have been encouraged to write on her own, not even letters to relatives thanking them for gifts. Mindy's recollection of how she "learned to write" extends no further than her high school English class--a telling remark in terms of her definition of writing:

I: You say you learned how to write in senior high school English class--"We learned about topic sentences, conclusions, and introductions." But you must have been writing obviously before then. What about . . . do you remember writing anything as a little kid, except in school? Did you write anything at home?

M: No, I don't think so.

I: You said here that you've written in different situations in school, letters to friends, and notes for class. . . . you haven't done any other writing, then? . . . Newspaper-type writing, complaint letters, letters requesting information, stories and poems, anything like that?

M: No, uh-uh.

Mindy's narrow conception of how writing functions in her life also extends into her image of herself as a writer in the future. She knows writing will be important, but her reasons center on writing as an act for the assessment of learned information, not for creativity or pragmatic functions. In her pre-optometry major, "there's going to be a lot of papers I'll have to write and stuff. And I want to get it down now before I go there [optometry school] and [find that] the content will be good but I'll be marked off because it doesn't fit together or sound good." After graduation, writing for Mindy will be important because she'll "need to look like I'm educated and not real dumb or anything." Asked what the main purpose of her writing will be then, Mindy replied, "collecting from people who haven't paid their bills."

The context of the writing class, with its focus on the very strategies, thinking processes, and opportunities for rhetorical and linguistic experimentation that Mindy seems to lack, suggests

that some growth in Mindy's model of writing would have occurred during the sixteen weeks of this study. The evidence for this growth, however, in the final few hours of our interviews, is not very substantial. In fact, it might be said that while Mindy had learned all sorts of procedures for inventing material, drafting, and revising her writing, and for responding to the writing of others and using their responses in her own writing, not much of her writing model, as a whole, had changed. This finding constrasted sharply with the three other case-study participants as well as the 36 class members generally, who came to view writing, and its function in their lives, quite differently by the end of the course.

Considering the monolithic and learning-sterile nature of Mindy's model of purpose, it is some comfort to remember that her literacy does not begin and end in her freshman writing class. Her future may immerse her in varied contexts that will change her model of writing and provide her with an eagerness to write.

Mindy's awareness of the source of her literacy, however, does not reflect the actual processes that have contributed to it, else she would be unable to write a simple letter to her grandmother, real or artificial. Mindy's model of writing, in other words, is not a model of her discourse knowledge, it is a model of how she thinks <u>about</u> discourse, what she is aware of knowing about it. Consequently, its manifestation in her purposes for writing and in her writing processes does not seem closely tied to her writing <u>abilities</u> per se, as these might be measured by control of surface features, size of

vocabulary, use of transitional devices, or paragraph coherence and organization. Instead, it emerges from a deeper, more socially-based conceptual framework for writing in general, one which, in this case, inhibits her explorations of rhetorical and pragmatic functions beyond the surface of her texts.

Discussion and Implications

The data gathered from all four case-study participants suggest that students' inter- and intra-textual purposes are strongly related to their models of writing--to the way they conceive of writing in a school setting and have integrated it into their lives. At one extreme, my discussions with Mindy show a student for whom writing has little or no importance, perhaps because so little in her life has encouraged her to write for any intrinsic purpose. Writing remains for students like Mindy a purely scholastic exercise. At the other extreme, two of the remaining three case-study participants had made writing so much a part of their lives that they scarcely needed an academic context in which to do it. We might expect such an attitude in students who plan to make writing a central activity of their careers; yet neither had. They simply recognized the centrality of written discourse in the lives of thinking, literate individuals. These different attitudes toward writing and its uses are perhaps the most important determinant of the way the students responded to writing tasks and talked about what they are doing and why.

This suggests that to foster the writing abilities of both kinds of students, we cannot impose on them rigidly defined

educational purposes and audiences from above; we must instead create contexts in which such purpose and audiences, and how discourse features relate to these, are questioned and manipulated from within. We must pay more attention, in other words, to what our courses are doing to the way students think about writing, not only to the way the go about doing it. And these sorts of focuses must begin at the very first stages of children's writing, both in school and at home.

Providing an environment that encourages students to leave behind their learning-sterile, dualistic models of writing is not easily accomplished. If we are to build purpose-oriented writing curricula, however, we must begin to accord a higher priority to several important principles of instructional design.

First, we need to encourage the enrichment of students' writing models. Although many students like Mindy have learned to perform satisfactorily in most writing situations, they do so reluctantly and with difficulty. For these students, the writing process is a process of doing, not learning; of showing competence or getting a task done, not of exploring their ideas or discovering new possibilities in their use of language. Writing instruction, therefore, must deal openly with students' discourse models, encouraging them to write and talk about the place of writing in their lives. This kind of meta-focus will not help all students with a dualistic view of knowledge to think of writing more contextually and relativistically (see Perry, 1970). But enough discussion of writing may help many young writers to break the bonds of their performance-based models of

academic writing. At the same time, teachers must be sensitive to the way their own instruction reinforces particular models of writing.

We must also encourage students to take risks by providing contexts rich in feedback, particularly in terms of the students' own expressed purposes. And we must give students the opportunity to write for a variety of discourse purposes to a variety of audiences; limiting them to artificial practice essays--what Britton calls "dummy runs" (Britton, et al., 1975)--only stagnates students in a performance-based context without the chance to explore the purposes at the heart of all writing events.

Most importantly, we need to encourage students to bring into the instructional setting the writing they are doing on their own. Entire courses can be designed in which there are no pre-established writing tasks; instead, class members are compelled to share their writing in a "workshop" atmosphere which allows them to develop intrinsic purposes for everything they do.

Finally, writers normally expect their readers to read their texts for meaning. This expectation is quite natural considering that few people other than copy editors, proofreaders, typesetters, and a few composition teachers read for any other reason than to derive meaning from a text. It has long been acknowledged in comprehension research that subjects cannot attend to one reading strategy (e.g., hunting for tri-syllabic words) while gaining understandings requiring another (e.g., being able to recall or respond to the text later).

When responding to students' writing "unnaturally" by looking for errors of syntax, organization, or diction, we violate the student's intentions to mean. If we are going to help students to improve the surface features of their prose, then we must respond naturally and point out how such problems affect our understanding of their intentions. Such an approach helps them to think of error relativistically, recognizing how it affects different readers in different ways depending on context and purpose. This more intuitively-based treatment of error is more easily integrated into long-term memory because it takes place within real communicative contexts, rather than as abstract rules to be memorized without function.

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